

Introduction

The beginning of the day care movement in the United States originated with the welfare and reform movements of the 19th century, when care for immigrant and working class children was needed while their impoverished mothers worked.¹ Much like in the Swedish system, the service emerged to support the necessity of mothers to enter the workforce in support of their families or national need.

Over the past several decades the US, like Sweden, has experienced a steady rise in the numbers and percentages of women, including mothers, who work for wages. Current figures reveal that upwards of 70 percent of American families with children have all adults in the workforce.² In 1985, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 50% of women with children younger than three years of age were working.

North Carolina, with a total population of 9 million, including over 2 million children, has one of the highest rates of working mothers with young children making the need for child care one of the state's top priorities.³ In some areas of the state over 70% of women with children are in the workforce. According to an economic study conducted in 2004, North Carolina's child care industry generates \$1.5 billion annually in gross receipts and directly supports more than 46,000 jobs — enabling parents to be part of an educated workforce, support

employee productivity in North Carolina industries, and help prepare young children for opportunities in the new economy.⁴

Annual fees charged for child care for an infant are double the average annual tuition and fees paid for state college.⁵ The licensed child care industry is currently serving over 275,000 children, including 97,000 children supported by child care tuition subsidies.⁶ In addition, the state's pre-Kindergarten program, More at Four, provided funding for 20,000 children to attend private and public programs in 2006-07.⁷

The numbers are not all good, however. In 2006, Kids Count data showed that in North Carolina over 20,000 children are living in poverty and 34% of children are living in homes where no parent has full-time, year-round work.⁸ Thousands of children do not have health insurance, almost 10,000 children are in foster care and approximately 80,000 are being raised by their grandparents.⁹

In an effort to increase the knowledge of state and community leaders, early childhood stakeholders and child development researchers about how to support the further development of early care and education services in North Carolina, two study trips were implemented in 2003 and 2005 followed by numerous presentations across the state to share translatable characteristics from a country that has set the gold standard for early care and education services.

¹ Scarr & Weinberg. (1986). The Early Childhood enterprise: Care and education of the young. *American Psychologist*, 41, 1140- 1141.

² http://www.businessweek.com/careers/workingparents/blog/archives/2007/03/media_vs_the_fa.html

³ http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/mb_snapshot.asp#Demographics

⁴ The Economic Impact of the Child Care Industry in North Carolina, 2004. <http://www.smartstart-nc.org/econimpact/NCEIRExecSumWeb.pdf>

⁵ NACCRRA 2007 Child Care in the State of North Carolina (<http://www.naccrra.org/randd/data/docs/NC.pdf>)

⁶ North Carolina Division of Child Development Monthly Statistical Summary Report - December 2007 (<http://www.nchildcare.net>)

⁷ http://www.osr.nc.gov/_pdf/MoreatFourFeb2007LegRpt.pdf

⁸ http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter/profile_results.jsp?r=35&d=1

⁹ 2004 Children's Defense Fund. Children in the States (<http://cdf.convio.net/site/DocServer/nc-3.pdf?docID=634>), National Child Care Information Center (<http://www.nccic.org/statedata/statepro/display.cfm?state=North%20Carolina>), Digest of Education Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06_170.asp, NACCRRA 2007 Child Care in the State of North Carolina (<http://www.naccrra.org/randd/data/docs/NC.pdf>)